

The Buddha's Teachings on Four Foundations of Mindfulness



Feb. 21 - March. 28, 2023

Hugh Byrne, PhD

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Elements of Life and Teachings of Buddha

- Siddhartha Gautama: Lived c. 563 – 483 BCE
- Born in Lumbini, current day Nepal
- Noble wealthy family, life of luxury, ease
- Sense of something missing (*dukkha*)
- Leaves home, enters homeless life (age 29)
- Studies, practices asceticism for six years

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Elements of Life and Teachings of Buddha

- Finds ‘middle path’—awakening under *Bodhi Tree*
- First teaching—on Four Noble Truths
- Forms monastic community (*sangha*)
- Teaches for 45 years in northern India
- Dies at 80... Teachings spread through Asia and beyond— south (*Theravada*) north (*Mahayana*) and to Tibet/Mongolia (*Vajrayana*)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

- The Buddha shared his major teaching on mindfulness in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, or discourse on the foundations of mindfulness
- According to scholar and translator Maurice Walshe, this discourse is ‘generally regarded as the most important sutta in the Pali Canon,’—the authoritative teachings of the Buddha in the Theravadan tradition
- The Buddha described mindfulness as the direct path to liberation

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

- The *Satipatthana Sutta* is a discourse with detailed instructions on bringing mindfulness—bare, non-judging awareness—to our individual experience in four domains or areas: 1) mindfulness of the body; 2) mindfulness of the ‘feeling tone’ of experience; 3) mindfulness of mind states; and 4) mindfulness of *dhammas*, or our experience through the lens of key Buddhist teachings
- In this discourse, the Buddha provides 13 different meditation practices within these four domains (body, feelings, etc.) that can take the practitioner to full liberation—complete freedom from suffering (*Nirvana/Nibbana*).

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

The meaning of *Satipatthana*

- *Sati* means mindfulness or awareness and *upatthana* means ‘placing near’ or ‘attending’ to something with mindfulness, according to Ven. Analayo
- *Satipatthana*, he argues, can best be translated as ‘attending with mindfulness,’ (to the body, etc.) or ‘presence of mindfulness’—with a balanced attitude and with mindfulness being ‘present’

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

1. This is a talk that the Buddha gave to the Kurus at Kammasadhamma—according to Ven. Analayo it was a later teaching given to advanced practitioners in the Delhi area
2. The Buddha said, ‘this is the *direct* path’ (*ekayano*) that leads all the way to freedom, to *Nirvana*, complete freedom from suffering
3. A ‘bhikkhu’—monk or practitioner—abides contemplating the body (feelings, etc.) with these four qualities of heart and mind:

(over)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

- ***diligent***—bringing a balanced and sustained energy to one's contemplation, not rigid but determined
- ***clearly knowing***—practicing with wisdom, fully grasping and comprehending what is taking place
- ***mindful***—cultivating a non-judging awareness of one's own experience
- ***free from desires and discontent in regard to the world***—letting go of the hindrances that make it difficult to be mindful, to practice, and with the mind concentrated on the task.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

4. There are 13 practices of mindfulness in the *Satipatthana Sutta*—six related to the body, one to feelings, one to mind states, and five to *dhammas*. Regarding mindfulness of breathing, the Buddha instructs the practitioner to:

- Find a suitable place to meditate and establish an appropriate posture
- Bring awareness to the breath (in-breath and out-breath)
- With awareness of the breath, experience the whole body
- With awareness of the breath, calm the body

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

5. After each of the thirteen mindfulness practices, the Buddha repeats a 'refrain': The meditator abides contemplating the body:

- 'internally, externally, and both internally and externally'
- Contemplates the nature of arising in the body, the nature of passing away, and both arising and passing away
- Mindful that 'there is a body' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuing mindfulness
- He/she/they abide 'independent, not clinging to anything in the world'

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

6. Then, for the other twelve practices of mindfulness, the *definition* of how one practices (diligent, clearly knowing, etc.) applies to each of these meditations—though it is not repeated—and the *refrain* is repeated after each one (body, postures, activities, etc.)

After the final practice—exploring one's experience through the framework of the four noble truths—and the final repetition of the refrain, the Buddha makes a prediction (*over*):

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Introduction

Main Elements and Structure of the Discourse

The Buddha's 'prediction': 'If anyone should develop these four *satipatthanas* in such a way for seven years (down to seven days), one of two fruits could be expected of them: 'final knowledge here and now' or 'if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning'—the two highest stages of freedom

The Buddha concludes that this is the 'direct path ... for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent ... for the realization of *Nibbana*', the end of suffering

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

- The goal of each of the four main practices in the *Satipatthana Sutta*—bringing mindfulness to the body, feelings, etc.—is to gain liberating insight into the truth about life and free ourselves completely from the clinging that leads to suffering.
- They can be seen as four gateways, each leading to the same goal—freedom from suffering
- Mindfulness of the body was seen by the Buddha as of exceptional importance on the path of awakening

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

“There is one thing that when cultivated and regularly practiced leads to deep spiritual intention, to peace, to mindfulness and clear comprehension, to vision and knowledge, to a happy life here and now, and to the culmination of wisdom and awakening... Mindfulness centered on the body.” (Buddha)

“If the body is not cultivated, the mind cannot be cultivated. If the body is cultivated, the mind can be cultivated.” (Buddha)

“Within this fathom-long body, with its perceptions and inner sense, lies the world, the cause of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path that leads to the cessation of the world.”
(Buddha)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

The original teachings (discourses) of the Buddha emphasize the great value of mindfulness of the body.

Those who do not practice mindfulness of the body do not “partake of the deathless.”

Mindfulness of the body is a source of joy and can be considered one’s best friend. Ven. Analayo cites a monk who reflected that if he were granted only one wish, it would be that the whole world might enjoy unbroken mindfulness of the body. (Analayo, pp. 124-125)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

Six practices are listed under the first *Satipatthana*—mindfulness of the body:

1. Awareness of *breathing*
2. Awareness of *bodily postures*
3. Clear knowledge in regard to *bodily activities*
4. Analysis of the body into its *anatomical parts*
5. Analysis of the body into its *elementary qualities*
6. *Contemplation of a dead body* in nine consecutive stages of decay

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(i) Mindfulness of Breathing

Mindfulness of breathing is the most widely practiced of the body contemplations. The Buddha awakened practicing mindfulness of breathing. It has a number of positive features:

- The breath is always available—unlike sounds, sensations, emotions—which may come and go
- It is a relatively neutral object—typically not inducing excitement or negativity and potentially helpful from the standpoint of meditation
- It has the quality (often) of calming and stabilizing the body and mind—and is closely connected to our feelings of ease and well-being and stress and difficulty (tightness, shortness of breath...)
- The breath can be a path of deep concentration and create conducive conditions for insight to arise

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(i) Mindfulness of Breathing

Mindfulness of breathing is the most widely practiced of the body contemplations. The Buddha awakened practicing mindfulness of breathing. It has a number of positive features:

- The breath is always available—unlike sounds, sensations, emotions—which may come and go
- It is a relatively neutral object—typically not evoking excitement or negativity and potentially helpful from the standpoint of meditation
- It has the quality (often) of calming and stabilizing the body and mind—and is closely connected to our feelings of ease and well-being and stress and worry (tightness, shortness of breath...)
- Mindfulness of breathing can be a path to deep concentration and create conducive conditions for insight to arise

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(i) Mindfulness of Breathing

The Buddha provides two pairs of instructions on mindfulness of breathing

- “Breathing in long, the practitioner knows ‘I breathe in long.’ Breathing out long, they know, ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, they know ‘I breathe in short.’ Breathing out short, they know, ‘I breathe out short.’”
- “The practitioner trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body.’ They train thus: ‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.’ They train thus: ‘I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation.’ They train thus: ‘I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.’”

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(ii) Mindfulness of Postures

The instructions for bringing mindfulness to *postures* focus on the four main postures of Buddhist meditation: walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. The main difference between engaging in these activities on an everyday level and practicing mindfulness of the body in these postures lies in the ‘knowing’—aware as we are engaged in the activity

- When walking, they know ‘I am walking’; when standing, they know ‘I am standing’; when sitting, they know ‘I am sitting’; when lying down, they know ‘I am lying down’; or they know accordingly how their body is disposed

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(iii) Mindfulness of Activities

The instructions for bringing mindfulness to *activities* focus on a range of everyday activities that the practitioner is instructed to engage in mindfully—'clearly knowing' when they are engaged in:

- going forward and returning
- looking ahead and away
- flexing and extending the limbs
- wearing robes, carrying the robe and bowl
- eating, drinking, tasting food
- defecating, urinating
- walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, keeping silent.'

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(iv) Mindfulness of Anatomical Parts of Body

The instructions for bringing mindfulness to different parts of the body encompass a list of thirty-one parts, organs, and fluids of the body—'up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin' and ranging from head-hairs to 'sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.'

The purpose of contemplating these constituent parts of the body is not to build aversion or hatred toward the body, but to lessen infatuation and enchantment with the body that lead to suffering.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(v) Mindfulness of the Elements of the Body

The fifth practice of mindfulness of the body—contemplation of the elements—helps us to see the impersonal nature of the body and all experience. There are four elements in this ancient scheme, and they relate to our experience in particular ways—earth/solidity, air/movement, fire/temperature, and water/liquidity. We can experience:

- The *earth* element when we feel the hardness or softness of what we are sitting on or in contact with
- The *fire* element in the heat on our skin or the warmth in our stomach
- The *water* element in swallowing, digesting, or feeling blood in our veins
- The *air* element in the movement of the breath

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(v) Mindfulness of the Elements of the Body

The idea is not to say that all experience can be understood in terms of these four elements, but to gain insight into all phenomena through approaching our experience in this more impersonal way.

- ‘In this way, a healthy degree of detachment develops, counteracting the grasping at what is, in the end, merely a combination of material qualities.’ (Analayo, 151)
- ‘Contemplation of the four elements has the potential to lead to a penetrative realization of the insubstantial and selfless nature of material reality.’ (Analayo, 151)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of the Body

(vi) Mindfulness of a Corpse in States of Decay

The final body contemplation is of a corpse in varying stages of decay. Unlike at the Buddha's time, we don't have a lot of bodies lying around decaying or being eaten by animals and we don't have much interest in investigating death close up in our culture.

For the Buddha and his sangha this was an important practice—it helped counteract sensual desire. If a monk was feeling lustful, what better practice than to meditate on a corpse? It was and is an important teaching on impermanence—just as this body is decaying, so will mine—providing insight into the inevitability of death.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

The Pali term for 'feeling' is *vedana*, which means both 'to feel' and 'to know'. *Vedana* does not mean 'feelings' in the sense of emotions—which are included in the third foundation: mindfulness of states of mind. *Vedana* is best understood as the 'feeling tone' of experience.

In Buddhist teachings, it is understood that all feelings—mental, physical—are experienced as 'pleasant', 'unpleasant', or 'neither pleasant nor unpleasant' (neutral).

When we stay with the immediate and direct experience—without mental proliferation—this helps us develop detachment and leads to freedom from suffering/*dukkha*

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

‘[C]ontemplation of feelings is a meditation practice of considerable potential. This potential is based on the simple but ingenious method of directing awareness to the very first stages of the arising of likes and dislikes, by clearly noting whether the present moment’s experience is felt as ‘pleasant’ or ‘unpleasant’ (Analayo, p157)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

The instructions in the discourse are simply to be aware of the feeling tone of experience:

- When feeling a pleasant feeling, one knows, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’
- When feeling an unpleasant feeling, one knows, ‘I feel an unpleasant feeling’
- When feeling a neutral feeling, one knows, ‘I feel a neutral feeling’

The same direct awareness is brought to worldly (pleasant, etc.) feelings—those connected with desire/clinging; and unworldly (pleasant, etc.) feelings—those linked to renunciation and letting go

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

A key understanding in relation to feeling tone/*vedana* is:

- Without mindfulness, pleasant feelings tend to give rise to clinging—wanting more of the things we like; unpleasant feelings tend to lead to aversion—pushing away or resisting what we don't like; and neutral feelings create the conditions for disconnection or boredom
- With mindfulness, we can stay with the direct experience without proliferation—and notice when the mind moves towards clinging, aversion, or checking out and come back to the body and to our immediate experience of the feeling tone

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness of Feeling Tone

We can practice working with feelings as though they were winds in the sky. ‘Sometimes they are pleasant, sometimes neutral, and sometimes unpleasant...’

‘Contemplating in this way, one becomes able to establish a growing degree of inner detachment with regard to feelings. A mindful observer of feelings, by the very fact of observation, no longer fully identifies with them and thereby begins to move beyond the conditioning and controlling power of the pleasure-pain dichotomy’ (Analayo, p160)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

The instructions for the third foundation of mindfulness are to be aware of mind states, just as they are.

- The sutta mentions five ordinary mind states, which the practitioner is to know:
 - A 'lustful' mind state to be lustful and a mind without lust to be without lust
 - An 'angry' mind and one without anger
 - A 'deluded' mind and one without delusion
 - A 'contracted' mind to be contracted
 - A 'distracted' mind to be distracted

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

The practitioner is to know four higher states of mind:

- A 'great' mind to be great and a 'narrow' mind to be narrow
- A 'surpassable' mind to be surpassable and an unsurpassable mind to be 'unsurpassable'
- A 'concentrated' mind to be concentrated and an unconcentrated mind to be 'unconcentrated'
- A 'liberated' mind to be liberated and an unliberated mind to be 'unliberated'

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

Ven. Analayo points out that contemplation of the mind does not involve active measures to change mind states that are unwholesome.

- ‘Rather, the task of mindfulness is to remain receptively aware by clearly recognizing the state of mind that underlies a particular train of thoughts or reactions.’ (Analayo, p175)
- This non-reactive awareness ‘counters the impulse towards either reaction or suppression contained in unwholesome states of mind and therefore deactivates their emotional and attentional pull.’ (Analayo, p175)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

The way of working with the four ‘ordinary’ states of mind is to be mindful of whether lust/greed is present or absent; whether anger/hatred is present or absent; and whether delusion/ignorance is present or absent.

These unskillful qualities are the roots of all unwholesome mental states. They are obstacles or hindrances to meditation and to freeing the mind—and lead to suffering.

The fourth of the ‘ordinary’ states of mind—the ‘contracted’ and ‘distracted states of mind—means, respectively, a mind affected by sloth and torpor and a mind affected by restlessness

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

The four higher states of mind are, according to the later ‘commentaries’ on the Buddha’s teachings, connected with concentration and liberation: a ‘great’ mind is related to the development of absorption—deeply concentrated states of mind that can be attained in meditation.

‘Surpassable’ also relates to deep states of absorption/*jhana* that are not yet the highest states of absorption; and ‘unsurpassable’ may refer to high levels of concentration or to full awakening. ‘Concentrated’ appears to include a range of mind states characterized by deep absorption; and ‘liberated’ may refer to temporary states of freedom (many moments) or complete liberation. (Analayo, p179-181)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

The renowned Thai forest meditation teacher Ajahn Chah highlights the Buddhist understanding of the nature of mind:

- “Within itself the mind is already peaceful. That the mind is not peaceful these days is because it follows moods. It becomes agitated because moods deceive it. Sense impressions come and trick it into unhappiness, suffering, gladness, and sorry, but the mind in its true nature is none of these things. Gladness or sadness is not the mind but only a mood coming to deceive us...” (cont.)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

3. Mindfulness of Mind States

“ The untrained mind gets lost and follows these things; it forgets itself and then we think it is ‘we’ who are upset or at ease or whatever. But really this mind of ours is already unmoving and peaceful. So, we must train the mind to know these sense impressions and not get lost in them. Just this is the aim of all this practice we put ourselves through.” (Ajahn Chah)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

The fourth foundation of mindfulness is a more complex category than the first three foundations and its meaning has been the source of some ambiguity. Part of the confusion has been around the meaning of “dhammas”, which has often been translated as ‘objects of the mind’ and can mean ‘anything that can be known’.

The main difference between this foundation and the three earlier ones is that the first three foundations look directly at one’s experience—the body, the feeling tone (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral), and the mind—whereas the fourth foundation investigates one’s subjective experience through the lens of central Buddhist teachings.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

As with the first three foundations, in this fourth foundation—or way of attending with mindfulness—the practitioner looks primarily at their own subjective experience: What is happening right now?

One investigates this experience through the frame of five key teachings of the Buddha: 1) the five **hindrances**; 2) the five **aggregates**; 3) the six **sense-spheres**; 4) the seven **factors of enlightenment**; and 5) the **four noble truths**

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

“What this satipatthana is actually concerned with are specific mental qualities (such as the five hindrances and the seven awakening factors), and analyses of experience into specific categories (such as the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, and the four noble truths)... During actual practice one is to look at whatever is experienced in terms of these dhammas [categories/frameworks/understandings].”
(Analayo, p183)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

A review of these five teachings and how we bring mindfulness to them:

I: The Five Hindrances

- The five **hindrances** are (i) **sensual desire**; (ii) **aversion**; (iii) **sloth/torpor**; (iv) **restlessness and worry**; and (v) **doubt**
- These are classical difficulties or obstacles to being present, seeing clearly, and waking up. We begin by recognizing if the hindrance is present or not. We also bring awareness to the conditions that led to the arising of the hindrance; the conditions that lead to its removal; and the conditions that can prevent it from arising again

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

I: The Five Hindrances (cont.)

The basic way of working with all of the hindrances is to bring mindfulness to them:

“The centrally important factor for removing a hindrance, whether slowly or quickly, is *sati* [mindfulness], since without awareness of the presence or arising of a hindrance, little can be done in terms of prevention or removal. This theme of mindful recognition is the central theme of contemplation of the hindrances” (199)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

II: The Five Aggregates

The aggregates are five aspects of subjective personality—encompassing all elements of our personal experience—that we easily identify as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ and this clinging leads to suffering. They are often referred to as the ‘aggregates of clinging’. The five aggregates are:

- (i) **material form**
- (ii) **feeling**
- (iii) **perception** or cognition
- (iv) **volitions**
- (v) **consciousness**

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

II: The Five Aggregates (cont.)

- *Material form* refers to anything that is affected by external conditions, such as cold, heat, hunger, thirst that can be known by the five senses
- *Feeling* refers to the affective quality of experience—the pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feeling tone of any experience
- *Cognition/perception* concerns the faculty of knowing, recognizing, understanding what something is
- *Volition* addresses the intentional or purposive activity of the mind
- *Consciousness* is the product of a sense organ meeting an object—the eye sees an object and the consciousness that arises out of the meeting of the sense organ and the object in this case is ‘eye consciousness’

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

II: The Five Aggregates (cont.)

- “By laying bare these five facets of the notion ‘I am’, this analysis of subjective personality into aggregates singles out the component parts of the misleading assumption that an independent and unchanging agent inheres in human existence, thereby making possible the arising of insight into the ultimately selfless (*anatta*) nature of all aspects of experience” (Analayo, p207)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

III: The Six Sense Spheres

- In this contemplation, we bring awareness to the sense doors and their objects (eye and visible forms; ear and sounds; nose and odors; tongue and flavors; body and tangible or felt objects) as well as the mind, which is treated as a sixth sense in Buddhist teachings (the mind and mind objects—e.g., thoughts)
- In the meeting of each of these sense doors and their related object, ‘fettors’ (latent tendencies in the mind) can arise that turn an experience that would otherwise be empty of clinging into identification and suffering. For example, if one has habitually identified certain looks and shapes in another person as attractive and leading to sense desire, when one sees such looks and shapes the tendency will be for clinging to arise. Likewise with other pleasant, unpleasant or neutral sounds, odors, thoughts, etc.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

II: The Six Sense Spheres (cont.)

Like with the hindrances, the practice with the sense-spheres is to:

- (i) know the conditions that lead to the arising of a fetter
- (ii) know the conditions that lead to its removal and
- (iii) know the conditions that prevent its future arising.

When working with the latent tendencies of the mind, mindfulness is critical. In an important teaching, the Buddha instructed Bahiya, “In the seen, let there just be the seen; in the heard, just the heard...” If we can bring bare awareness to what is seen, heard, cognized, the mind will not be carried away by subjective biases and distorted cognitions.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

IV: The Seven Factors of Awakening

These seven qualities of heart/mind are wholesome qualities that are conducive to awakening, to freedom. The seven qualities are:

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation
3. Energy
4. Joy
5. Tranquility
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

IV: The Seven Factors of Awakening (cont.)

Of these awakening factors, the Buddha said, ‘Just as a river inclines towards the ocean, so these awakening factors incline towards Nirvana.’

- As with the unwholesome mental qualities (the hindrances), one’s task is to know the presence or absence of the awakening factors
- But in the case of the awakening factors, the practitioner cultivates conditions that help to **maintain** and **develop** the quality in question, and, if it is absent, they train themselves to know the conditions that lead to its arising

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

IV: The Seven Factors of Awakening (cont.)

The awakening factors *can* be seen and practiced as a sequential development with each factor building to the next factor:

- By bringing **Mindfulness** to our experience, we develop the quality of **Investigation**—particularly the ability to distinguish the wholesome from unwholesome states of mind—and this arouses the awakening factor of **Energy** (which helps to counter sloth-and-torpor). Energy then gives rise to **Joy**, which gives rise to **Tranquility**, which in turn helps develop focus and **Concentration**. With the mind concentrated and free from hindrances, **Equanimity**, a deep sense of peace, is established.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

IV: The Seven Factors of Awakening (cont.)

“Practically applied, the whole set of the seven awakening factors can be understood to describe the progress of *satipatthana* practice to this level of deep equanimity.

On the basis of well-established **mindfulness**, one investigates the nature of subjective reality... Once sustained **investigation** gains momentum (viz. **energy**), with growing insight the object of contemplation becomes clearer, and the meditator feels inspired (viz. **joy**) to continue with the practice. If at this point the danger of getting carried away by elation and agitation can be avoided, continued contemplation leads to a state of **calmness**, when the mind stays effortlessly with its meditation object without succumbing to distraction (viz. **concentration**). With maturing insight, this process culminates in a state of firm **equanimity** and detachment.” (Analayo, 238)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

V: The Four Noble Truths

- The final practice in the contemplation of *dhammas* is bringing mindfulness to our experience in the light of the four noble truth: the existence of suffering, the origin of suffering, the end of suffering, and the path to the end of suffering.
- The Pali word is *dukkha*, which is most frequently rendered as suffering in English, but has a broader meaning. Other translations are unsatisfactoriness, dis-ease, stress, friction. A literal translation connotes the axle of a wheel (*kha*) that is bad or not functioning (*duk*), thus giving the sense of something being ‘out of kilter’

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

V: The Four Noble Truths (cont.)

- There is an unsatisfactoriness, an un-graspability (*dukkha*) to all conditioned experience. Everything is subject to conditions, impermanent, and without an inherent self.
- In order for the unsatisfactory nature of phenomena to lead to suffering, it is necessary for *craving* to be present—an unskillful holding onto or resistance to how things are—this is the second noble truth
- When we see clearly into where our suffering is coming from (craving) and let go, suffering is eradicated—this is the third noble truth

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

V: The Four Noble Truths (cont.)

- ‘Suffering’ unlike ‘unsatisfactoriness’, is not inherent in the phenomena of the world, only in the way in which the unawakened mind experiences them. This is indeed the underlying theme of the four noble truths as a whole: the suffering caused by attachment and craving can be overcome by awakening. For an *arahant* [one who is fully awakened] the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena is no longer capable of causing suffering.” (Analayo, 245)

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

V: The Four Noble Truths (cont.)

The fourth noble truth provides a path to the end of suffering—an **eightfold path** of training in the cultivation of **wisdom, virtue, and meditation**. The eight elements of the eightfold path are:

- Wise/right/appropriate understanding and wise intention. These two factors constitute the wisdom training of the path
- Wise speech, action, and livelihood make up the wisdom training of the path
- Wise effort, mindfulness, and concentration are the mind training component of the paths

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

4. Mindfulness of “*Dhammas*”

V: The Four Noble Truths (cont.)

- The way we work with this contemplation in the fourth foundation of mindfulness is to bring awareness to our own experience and know the presence or absence of *dukkha*, the origin of *dukkha* (craving); the cessation of *dukkha* (*Nirvana*, awakening); and the path to the cessation of *dukkha* (the eightfold path).
- Using the four noble truths in this way as the framework for investigating our own experience is a gateway to realizing the end of suffering, momentarily or realizing the complete cessation of suffering in our life.

Contact



Websites:

www.hugh-byrne.com

www.mindfulnessstraining.org

www.imcw.org

E-mail: hughgbyrne123@gmail.com

Meditations: www.insighttimer.com/hughbyrne